



REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS
For a
High-Poverty Schools Heating Assistance
Program

Date Issued: April 4, 2022

Questions Due by: April 22, 2022

Initial Application Due: May 6, 2022

Comprehensive Application Due: TBD

Vermont Public Service Department

112 State Street

Montpelier, Vermont 05620-2601

(802) 828-2811

TTY/TTD (VT): 1-800-734-8390

Internet: <http://publicservice.vermont.gov/>

OVERVIEW:

Vermont was awarded \$1.05 billion in Coronavirus State and Local Fiscal Recovery Funds (Recovery Funding) as part of the federal American Rescue Plan Act of 2021. The Governor's Recovery Plan is focused on transparent investments in key infrastructure needs including housing, broadband, wastewater and sewer systems, climate change prevention and mitigation, and economic development. The explicit objective of this Plan is to provide long term economic recovery opportunities to communities statewide, with a focus on those regions or counties struggling the most with job losses and declines in demographics and income levels.

The Clean Energy Development Board (CEDB) was allocated \$5 million of the Recovery Funding appropriated to the Public Service Department by the 2021 Vermont General Assembly. The CEDB designed five programs with this funding that offers relief to households, schools, and small businesses that experienced financial or health impacts from the pandemic. This request for proposals (RFP) is intended to provide assistance to schools that were disproportionately impacted by the pandemic with improvements that advance equitable funding across districts. There is \$2.5 million of federal American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds available for grants to qualifying schools through this RFP.

The Public Service Department (PSD or Department) requests proposals from qualifying Vermont elementary and secondary schools for heating ventilation air conditioning (HVAC) system (including related controls and exhaust systems) repairs, replacements, and improvements that support those schools' ability to provide education and address educational disparities.

Through this RFP, the PSD plans to award grants for projects at eligible schools that (at a minimum):

- Improve health and safety through repairs, upgrades, and replacement of heating, ventilation, air-conditioning (HVAC) systems/components.
- Maximize long-term heating/utility cost savings, through repairs, upgrades, and replacement of HVAC systems and related components.
- Ameliorate the public health and the economic effects of the pandemic on schools negatively affected by the pandemic.
- Build a recovery that is strong, resilient, and increases equity with investments that promote growth and opportunity that have long-term effects
- Support COVID recovery to schools to address educational disparities

Projects eligible to be supported through this RFP shall:

1. Assist with school energy cost reduction through HVAC repairs, improvements, and/or the installation of new high efficiency pellet or woodchip boilers, furnaces, and or cold climate heat-pumps.
2. Maximize the displacement of fossil fuel use for space heating
3. Decrease the particulate emissions and inefficient use of wood fuel.

An applicant may only submit one proposal per qualifying school, however an applicant may be named on more than one proposal if the additional proposal(s) are for other qualifying schools. Additionally, an entity is allowed to be a sub-contractor on more than one proposal. Proposals must be for qualifying schools based in Vermont. All incentives must be for the benefit of Vermont residents that meet a low- and moderate-income guidelines set by the PSD. Projects receiving grant awards and the subcontractors (subrecipients) retained by the contractor for the project(s) must complete the project(s) no later than December 31, 2026. **Funds cannot be used for projects that have already begun construction or for equipment purchases that have already been made.**

PROGRAM SUMMARY:

Award Description	
Recipient Eligibility:	Vermont Elementary or Secondary School with Title I eligibility
Funding Type:	Program Grant
Total Amount available: <i>Maximum Grant:</i> <i>Minimum Grant:</i>	\$2,500,000 \$250,000 \$25,000
Cost Share Required from recipients:	Tiered based on poverty level of the school: 10% 25%, or 45%
Eligible Projects:	Installations of clean heating technologies. Repairs and upgrades of HVAC systems (including controls) for health and safety reasons and for energy cost reductions. Necessary electric service and electric panel repairs when related to heating projects.
Clean Heating Technologies Allowed:	Pellet fueled heating appliances (boilers, furnaces) that are: Highly efficient ($\geq 85\%$) Low particulate emissions (≤ 2.0 grams per hour) Woodchip fueled heating appliances (boilers, furnaces) that are: Highly efficient ($\geq 80\%$) Low particulate emissions (≤ 2.0 grams per hour) On-site wood pellet/chip storage systems Cold-climate heat pumps (air or ground source) Heat pump hot water heaters
Additional Grant Program Proviso	An on-site particulate emission monitoring system will be installed (outdoors) with each project that receives grant funding where wireless internet is available. The associated equipment will be included as part of the grant

	and will not need to be included in budgets that are submitted as part of the application process.
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SUBMITTING THE APPLICATION

This grant program will include a two-step application process. An Initial Application will need to be submitted. Initial applications will be reviewed and a selection of applications will be invited to submit a Comprehensive Application. Applicants will be notified of their selection before the end of May 2022. Being invited to submit a Comprehensive Application is not a confirmation of funding for an applicant’s project. The intent will be to invite Comprehensive Applications for projects totaling slightly more funds than are available (e.g. \$3 million of applications for which \$2.5 million can be awarded).

Initial Applications must arrive at the Public Service Department (PSD) office by 4 p.m. on Friday, May 6, 2022. Applications can be mailed or emailed. Applicants should allow adequate time to ensure receipt of their proposal by the deadline if mailing in a hard copy. Proposals received after this time and date will not be considered. Information for what information to be included in the Initial Application is below on page 6 of this RFP and on the Initial Application form attached as Appendix A.

Comprehensive Applications submission deadlines will be determined and will be clearly stated in solicitation for applicants selected to apply for the Comprehensive Application. Information for what information to be included in the Comprehensive Application is below on pages 6-8.

Any questions regarding this RFP should be submitted in writing, preferably by email, with the subject line, “High-Poverty Schools Heating Assistance RFP Question.” Questions are due by close of business, Friday, April 22, 2022 and will be answered comprehensively at the CEDF web site (http://publicservice.vermont.gov/renewable_energy/cedf) alongside this RFP by Tuesday, April 26, 2022.

Proposals and questions should be addressed to:

Christopher Heine
Clean Energy Program Specialist
Vermont Public Service Department
112 State Street
Montpelier, VT 05620-2601
Phone: (802) 828-8198
Email: christopher.heine@vermont.gov

INFORMATION FOR APPLICANTS

General Information: While only one proposal may be submitted per school, subrecipients (e.g. HVAC contractors) may be included in more than one proposal.

Term: The projects funded under this solicitation should be operational and completed on or before December 31, 2026.

Reporting: Reporting shall be required for all projects receiving an award. Reporting shall include quarterly progress reports as well as a final report submitted within three months of the grant end date or by January 30, 2026, whichever comes first.

Quarterly reports and a final project report shall include expenditures made, specific activities, and results. Five percent of grant funds will be held back until the final report has been received and approved by the PSD

Cost Share: Applicants will be required to demonstrate cost share as part of the project. That cost-sharing should be indicated in the application. A letter of commitment identifying the cost share and its source of funding shall be included as part of the Comprehensive Application. For example, if an applicant has received a commitment from an organization to provide funds that cover part of the cost for the project, the applicant must provide a copy of the commitment letter.

Exclusions: All projects must be based in Vermont and for the benefit of Title I eligible schools in Vermont. Funds cannot be used for projects that have already begun construction or for equipment purchases that have already been made or ordered.

Revisions: The PSD reserves the right to make necessary changes to this RFP at any time including termination of the program if in the best interest of the State.

INFORMATION REQUIRED FROM APPLICANTS

I. Initial Application

An initial application (attached as Appendix A) must be completed for projects to be considered for grant funding. The grantee will need to match no less than 10% of the project's total cost. All grant funds (including match) must be used for activities related to the project during the grant period (cash or time spent on the project prior to the grant period cannot be applied as matching funds). Projects that receive grant funding must be completed on, or prior to, December 31, 2026.

Applicants must submit a hard signed copy or an electronic copy of the application to Christopher Heine the Vermont Public Service Department. Applications must arrive prior to the deadline.

Initial Applications will be reviewed and scored and those applications that best meet the objectives for the program will be invited to submit a Comprehensive Application. See “Evaluation Criteria” on page 8-9 for scoring criteria. School Districts/School Unions that submit more than one application may be asked to prioritize their applications based on highest need due to limited funding availability.

II. Comprehensive Application

NOTE: This information will only be required to be submitted if an applicant after submitting an Initial Application, is invited to submit a Comprehensive Application. Applicants may not submit a Comprehensive Application prior to or in lieu of submitting an Initial Application.

Comprehensive Applications should be prepared simply and economically, providing a straightforward, concise description of the applicant's ability to meet the requirements of the RFP. Fancy bindings, colored displays, promotional materials, and so forth are not desired. Emphasis should be on completeness and clarity of content.

Comprehensive Applications should be no longer than 10 pages, with no less than a 12-point font and one-inch margins. Resumes, letters of support, and the Budget Worksheet, or appendixes **do not** count toward the 10-page limit. The Summary Page and all other information count towards the 10-page limit.

*A. **Summary Page** - Comprehensive Applications must include a one-page summary that includes the following four items:*

1. **Project Title** - Provide a descriptive title for the project.
2. **Identification of Applicant Organization** - State the full name and address of the school or school district responsible for the Application and list the main contact and their contact information.
3. **Project Description** that shall include, at a minimum:
 - **Statement of Need** describing the need this project will address. Include data to demonstrate the need and cite the source of the data.
 - **Population Served** including number and demographic characteristics of those served.
 - **Results** including a description of the measurable proposed impacts of the project, with at least three (3) performance measures that will be tracked and reported. Wherever possible, include baselines and goals for each performance measure.
 - **Evaluation** describing the data collection, analysis, and quality assurance measures you will use to assure ongoing, effective tracking of grant requirements and outcomes.
 - **Equity Impact** describing how this project will help build a just, equitable and sustainable COVID-19 recovery and how disproportionate impacts of inequities are addressed.

- **Budget** including any other possible funding for the project.
- **Cost savings describing the projected fuel and/or electricity savings.**
- **Energy Savings describing the projected fuel and/or electricity to be saved.**
- **Special Considerations** describing any other information that might assist the State in its selection.

4. **Signature** - Please sign to indicate you have read and acknowledge all of the conditions of this request for proposals, and that, to the best of your knowledge, the information you have supplied is accurate. Electronic signatures are allowed.

B. Project Narrative

Describe the project for which funding is requested. Provide a statement of to the project's goal(s) and objectives. Describe what the project will accomplish if successful. State why this project should receive PSD grant funding and whether the project would happen without PSD grant funding.

C. Personnel

While applicants are not expected to have demonstrable knowledge, skills, and experience as it relates to the required work of the proposal, personnel contracted for the project should be experienced in the technologies proposed for the project. Proposals should include a description of the subrecipient's (e.g., contractor's) prior experience in all areas relevant to the proposed program. The proposal must identify all persons that will be contracted for the proposed project by skill and qualifications. Identify key personnel by name and title and provide their prior experience (if resumes are included, they **do not** count toward the 10-page limit). Subcontractors (if known) must be listed, including the firm name and address and contact person, and complete description of work to be subcontracted. Include descriptive information concerning subcontractor's organization and abilities.

D. Work Plan & Timeline

Describe in narrative form the plan for accomplishing the work required to create and deploy the project. Include a description of any activities in support of the proposal that have already been completed or are in process.

Describe the plan for project oversight, quality assurance measures, and financial management, and which team member(s) will have these responsibilities.

Provide a timeline for the project development and implementation.

E. Budget

The Department will provide a budget worksheet to those applicants that are selected for the Comprehensive Application stage of the program.

F. Additional Information

Proposals must include information described in sections A-F above. In addition, proposals can include any other pertinent and important information.

METHOD OF AWARD

Awards will be made in the best interest of the State. All other considerations being equal, priority will be given first to projects that include projects in regions or counties struggling the most with job losses, declines in demographics and income levels. Priority will also be given to those projects developed in coordination with other planned infrastructure development for the greatest transformative impact. Qualitative determinations will be made regarding community need and community impacts. Scoring will not be numerical.

1. **Evaluation Criteria:** A selection committee will review, analyze and rank all submittals based on their response to the information requested. At a minimum, the selection process will include the following criteria in the evaluation of proposals. These criteria are not necessarily listed in order of importance:

- Need
- Population served
- Measurable results and evaluation
- Equity Impact
- Geographical Equity
- Opportunities for coordinated projects
- Project's leverage of/coordination with other projects, programs, or funding
- Energy/fuel savings
- Project's potential for energy cost savings
- Use or adoption of renewable fuels for heating
- Increase in the health and safety of students and staff of the school
- Increase of local business revenue cycles within Vermont
- Community involvement and acceptance of the project

2. **Experience & Qualifications of applicant and sub-contractors (if known):**

- Knowledge and experience in the relevant project area, including successful experience with similar projects
- Demonstrated ability to complete project on time, on budget, and to complete the reporting requirements
- Previous experience with state and/or federal contracts or grants

3. **Budget:**

- Budget line items and amounts are sufficiently described and justified to explain the necessity of each item
- Costs are reasonable and competitive

GENERAL TERMS AND CONDITIONS

1. Projects funded through this RFP must comply with Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act. While energy improvements to historic buildings are greatly encouraged, they must be carefully planned to avoid unintended consequences. Funded work must not harm or destroy historic buildings or archeological sites that are eligible for or listed on the National Register of Historic Places. Some buildings that are over 50 years old are likely to meet National Register criteria. The Vermont Division for Historic Preservation can provide information on National Register status, appropriate treatments for improving energy performance in historic buildings, and a list of preservation consultants who can assist applicants in planning their projects. Generally, thermal energy measures and residential stove and boiler/furnace upgrades will meet preservation guidelines. Applicants may want to consult the Division's website at www.historicvermont.org
2. The PSD reserves the right to reject any and all proposals received as a result of this RFP for any reason, to waive minor irregularities in any proposals received, and to negotiate with any party in any manner deemed necessary to best serve the interests of the State.
3. The PSD shall not be responsible for any costs incurred by any party in preparation of any proposal submitted in response to this RFP.
4. The PSD reserves the right to amend or cancel this RFP at any time if the best interest of the State requires such action.
5. News releases pertaining to this RFP, grant award, or the project shall not be made without prior written approval from the PSD.
6. All parties submitting proposals shall be Equal Opportunity Employers. During the duration of the performance any grant agreement resulting from this RFP, the awardee shall comply with all federal, state and local laws respecting non-discrimination in employment.
7. After a grant agreement is executed, the PSD will reimburse the contractor(s) for actual work performed and expenses incurred up to the specified grant amount. Specific payment provisions will be arrived at upon mutual agreement of the parties. All payments will require the submission of an itemized billing of work performed to date in sufficient detail to justify payment. Final payment will require the submission of a final report.
8. Insurance:

- a. Workers Compensation: With respect to all operations performed, the awardee shall carry workers' compensation insurance in accordance with the laws of the State of Vermont.
 - b. General Liability and Property Damage: With respect to all operations performed under the grant, the awardee shall carry general liability insurance having all major divisions of coverage including, but not limited to:
 - c. Premises - Operations
 - d. Products and Completed Operations
 - e. Personal Injury Liability
 - f. Contractual Liability
 - g. The policy shall be on an occurrence form and limits shall not be less than:
 - h. \$1,000,000 per Occurrence
 - i. \$1,000,000 General Aggregate
 - j. \$1,000,000 Products/Completed Operations Aggregate
 - k. \$ 50,000 Fire/ Legal/Liability
 - l. Automotive Liability: The awardee shall carry automotive liability insurance covering all motor vehicles, including hired and non-owned coverage, used in connection with the Agreement. Limits of coverage shall not be less than: \$1,000,000 combined single limit.
 - m. The awardee shall name the State of Vermont and its officers and employees as additional insureds for liability arising out of this Agreement.**
9. The PSD and the State assume no liability in any fashion with respect to this RFP or any matters related thereto. All prospective contractors and their subcontractors or successors, by their participation in the RFP process, shall indemnify, save and hold the State and its employees and agents free and harmless from all lawsuits, causes of action, debts, rights, judgments, claims, demands, damages, losses and expenses or whatsoever kind in law or equity, known and unknown, foreseen and unforeseen, arising from or out of this RFP and/or any subsequent acts related thereto, including but not limited to the recommendation of a contractor and any action brought by an unsuccessful applicant.
10. All grant awards are subject to the availability of funding.
11. All funding for contract awards will be federal American Recovery Plan Act (ARPA) funds and therefore all ARPA fund requirements and restrictions will apply

Appendix A

Initial Application

High-Poverty Schools Heating Assistance **Program**

Initial Application

Please fill out each section below to the best of your knowledge/ability, print and sign. Send either a signed original to the address below and/or email an electronic copy to christopher.heine@vermont.gov.

Christopher Heine
Public Service Department
112 State St.
Montpelier, VT 05620

School Name:

School District/Union:

Applicant Name:

Email:

Phone:

Title:

Authorized Representative (if different applicant)

Proposed Project Description: (Please include a list of tasks to complete project; project timeline including estimated start and completion dates; Personnel that will be responsible for the completion of the above should be identified.)

Estimated Total Project Cost:

Funds Requested:

Source for matching funds:

(**Matching funds of no less than 10% required.** Describe source of funds, including pending and projected funds. Describe whether there is an outstanding request or request yet to be made for any of the funds and the likelihood of receiving funds; include expected timelines for confirming pending sources of requested funds)

Approvals Required (include a brief description of any town or school approvals received or needed for project):

Permitting Required (include a list of permits to be obtained for the project):

Preliminary Planning/Project Development (Describe any planning or project development that has been completed for the project):

Signature of Authorized Representative:

Date: